



x

~~4371 K 3~~ 4373 K 21

INTRODUCTION.

Tindal (M.)
- K



THE Reason why this Second Part of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, has not appeared sooner, is chiefly owing to an Indisposition, which brought the Author, bending beneath the Weight of almost Eighty Years, so low, as to render him incapable of thinking intently on any Subject, but for a short Time. Old Age alone makes the Mind (so intimate is the Union) ~~equally decay with the Body~~: The Memory, that Store-house of Arguments so necessary in a Controversial Discourse, is greatly impaired, and with it that Vigor of Mind, which should set Arguments in their best Light, must be not a little weakened. When a Man has scarce Spirits enough to support Nature, to exhaust them by the tiresome Labour of the Brain, is irksome beyond Expression. These Considerations, however, could not divert the Author of *Christianity*, &c. (being engaged in Honour to write a Second Part) from endeavouring to perform his Promise: Rather than quit the Field, tho' attacked by an *Host* of Adversaries, he resolves to dye, Soldier-like, *La Plume à la Main*. During this long Interval, there have been a great Number of Writers, too many

B

even

even to name ; who (tho' as little agreeing with themselves as with him) have had so much Charity, and some of them after a charitable Manner, as to endeavour to rectify his Mistakes. But as there is nothing on his Side of the Question, except TRUTH to bias his Judgment, after having impartially considered his Adversaries Arguments, he is so far from being able to agree with any One of them, that what they have wrote serves only to confirm him in his former Sentiments.

It cannot be improper to remind the Reader of the State of this Controversy, that he may judge whether my Opponents have not, for the most part, combated those Fantoms they themselves have raised. The Principle on which I build the whole of my Reasoning is, That *Men are Religious as they are Rational* : The brute Creation being void of Reason, is, on this Account, utterly incapable of having any Religion ; or of even knowing there is a God. If human Reason cannot enable Men to discern, that God has given them a Rule to govern their Actions by, and what this Rule is ; they must be, if not as ignorant as Brutes, in an everlasting State of Scepticism and Incertainty, in all Matters relating to Religion ; and would, indeed, be in a worse Condition than those inferiour Animals, who have Instinct always to direct them to the *End* for which they were severally made. The Brutes, from Age to Age, continue to enjoy those Powers in the same Perfection, which the wise Author of their Being originally invested them with. We have, therefore, the utmost Reason to conclude, that the most finished Part of the Creation, viz. Men and Angels, were also created *perfect* ; and that they still do, and ever shall subsist in the same perfect State, in which they



they were created, without any Loss, or Impairing of those nobler Faculties, with which God originally endowed them; and that as far as Men represent those Faculties imperfect, and insufficient to the Ends and Purposes of their Beings, so far they strike at all Religion, and the very Being of God himself; which Reason alone can prove, and which Revelation always supposes thus proved; as it likewise does the moral Nature and Perfections of the Deity, and those essential Differences founded in the Nature of Things, on which all Morality is built.

MEN, therefore, in endeavouring by Reason to destroy the Force of Reason, shew, by that very Attempt, they are self-condemned; and cannot but be conscious that they themselves have nothing but Reason to trust to: By such a Conduct they give People just Occasion to suspect, that they really have no Regard for Religion, but as it may serve to *enslave* Mankind: What aggravates this monstrous Crime is, that while they thus vilify their Maker, and despise the best Gift he can bestow on Man, they pretend they are doing Service both to God and Man.

THE Author of *Christianity*, &c. presumes to differ from these Gentlemen, and dares assert, that there cannot be *Two Independent Rules or Laws* (Words used promiscuously) for human Actions; but that the sole Rule is *Reason*; which he affirms to be sufficiently comprehensive, as it takes in all those Duties incumbent on Men, which flow from the Consideration of their own rational Nature; and from those Relations they stand in both to their Creator, and Fellow-Creatures.

BUT since no Rule can oblige further than it is known, the necessary Consequence is, that they who have done their best to understand, and practise this all-comprehending Rule,

Rule, tho' they should mistake in applying it, are as acceptable to God as if they had not been mistaken; since they have done all that God could require of them.

IDIOTS, Mad-men and Children, for Want of *Reason*, are incapable of *Religion*; and therefore are not liable to be rewarded, or punish'd for their Actions: As for Men endowed with Reason, they will be dealt with according to the Use they have made of their several Talents, whether such Talents are great or small; since their having different Talents, or Abilities of Mind, doth no more depend upon themselves, than their different Constitutions and Complexions.

THIS being premis'd, I shall, as far as the Brevity of a *Preface* will permit, make a few Remarks on my Opponents; particularly on Mr. *Jackson*, Mr. *Foster*, and Dr. *Conybeare*; the First a *Low Church-man*, the Other a *Dis-senter*, and the Third a *High Church-man*.

Remarks on
Christianity,
&c. p. 7.

As to the First of these, I find no Arguments in his Remarks on *Christianity*, &c. which he himself had not before confuted; either in his *Plea for human Reason*, or in the *Defence* of it: And tho' he owns that *Revelation does not introduce, or enjoin any new moral Duty*; yet he contends, that *without it, Religion wou'd not be a Rule of Life to Man absolutely perfect*; but that *both together constitute this Rule*.

p. 53, 54.

In his *Plea for human Reason*, he says, *There is nothing wanting to make a Rule, or Law sufficient to the End of its being a Rule, or Law, but that it be plain and clear, and easy to be understood; and enforced with sufficient Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments*. Now Reason (says he) *was such a Law to Mankind*. And consequently, I say, a Rule absolutely perfect: For if it was any Ways imperfect, it would not be sufficient to answer the End for which it was given; viz. Mens present and future Happiness: And a Rule no Ways imperfect, must certainly be a Rule absolutely perfect. To

INTRODUCTION.

V

To prove the Perfection of this Rule of Reason, he says, *Can any Foundation of Revelation be stronger than the immutable Laws of Truth and Reason? Can any Revelation past (which in the Nature of it can be no more than an highly probable Truth, depending on historical Tradition) carry a greater, or so great an Evidence of the Authority of God, as Natural Religion and Morality does; which is the natural revealed Will of God made known by the demonstrative Evidence of Reason? If Revelation is built on any other Foundation but Natural Religion, it is built upon Hay and Stubble; nothing firm, nor lasting.* ---- Na-Ib. p. 67. *Natural Religion is as capable of Demonstration as any Proposition in the Mathematicks, and has been demonstrated over and over in all material Instances.* ----- And as to the Duties Natural Religion requires, he says, *Every One by employing his natural Reason in the best Manner he was able, might, and could not but see the Reasonableness and Obligation of Piety and moral Duties; that he ought to worship his Creator, acknowledge, and submit to his Providence, and be thankful for the Benefits of it; that he ought also to be obedient to Governours for the Good of Society; to be righteous, just, and charitable to Man his Fellow-Creature, be willing to do him all the Good he can, and abstain from all Injury and Violence; that he ought also to use temperately the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Life. There never needed any subtil Reasoning to prove these plain Duties, which Nature taught and commanded; and the Transgression of any of which, is as repugnant to the plain Evidence, and Dictates of Natural Reason, as it is to the revealed Will of God: And the natural Obligation of all these Duties is Eternal and Immutable; and therefore as strong as any Revelation can make them: And Happiness or Misery, Rewards*

Defence of the
Plea, p. 4.

Plea for hum.
Reason, p. 15,
16, 17.

wards or Punishments, attend Obedience or Disobedience to them with as much Certainty, drawn by Reason from the Divine Attributes, as from the express Assurance of Revelation: And every One always had a Right, not only to teach and inculcate, but also to command the Practice of these Duties as the Laws and Will of the great Author of Nature.

Introduct. to
the Def. of
the Plea,
P. 5, 6.

----- The Difference between Natural and Revealed Religion is not in any new moral Truths, or Acts of Piety and religious Worship discover'd in the Gospel; which the Light of Nature was not able to make known: The spiritual Worship of the One True God, and every moral Rule of Life, is not only plainly discoverable by Reason, but was actually taught amongst the Heathens; nor does the Gospel command any Duty relating to God, our Neighbours, or ourselves, which was not taught by Plato, Tully, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, and Others. ----- So that in respect of Virtue, Morality, and Religion, properly as such, the Law of Na-

Plea, &c. p.
26, 28.

ture was perfect. ----- The Gospel has, and can have no more Authority to determine the Truth, and Obligation of Religion, of Piety towards God, Righteousness towards Men, and Sobriety with respect to ourselves, than Natural Reason has. The Foundation of True Religion, and the great necessary Duties of it are strictly demonstrable, and may be determined without any other Guide than Reason only.

If then Revelation has not super-added any new moral Duties; or any new Motives, or Helps for doing them; but both, as this excellent Divine says, are demonstrable by Reason; must not Demonstration swallow up Faith? Or can Certainty and Probability consist together? Can we, when we see a Thing demonstrated by Reason, condescend to believe it from Revelation; of which the most, this judicious Author pretends to affirm, is, that In
its

INTRODUCTION.

vii

its Nature it can be no more than a highly probable Truth, depending on historical Tradition.

NAY, this Writer in Effect owns, that Revelation is far from mending the Matter, when he wishes he cou'd say, that *the Points wherein Christians differ from each other, did not affect the Being of Religion and Virtue, and the Mo-*^{Plea, &c. p. 31.}
tives and Obligations to them, as much as those wherein the Philosophers differ'd from each other. I think, says he, the Differences are really greater on the Side of Christians; and then instances in the Doctrine of absolute, and unconditional Decrees (the Doctrine of all the Western Churches, at least, ever since the Time of St. Austin) which, he says, concerns the very Being of Virtue and Religion, and renders the Motives and Obligations to both precarious, and even ineffectual. ----- The Heathen Deists generally agreed in the Belief of One Supreme, Self-existent Agent, or God, and of his Providence in the Government of Mankind.^{Ib. p. 32.}
----- All but Atheists agreed in these great, and necessary Points of Religion. But Christians disagree about the Fundamentals both of Natural and Reveal'd Religion. Speaking of the Church of Rome (which comprehended till the Reformation, for many Ages, the whole Body of Western Christians) he says, It is not only as bad, but^{Defen. of the Plea, p. 75.}
far worse both in Principles and Practice, than the grossest Pagan Church ever was. ----- Do not their wicked Doc-^{Plea, &c. p. 32.}
trines and Practices subvert the very Foundation of Religion and Virtue, as much, or more, than the worst Opinions of Pagans ever did. ---- There seems to be as much, or^{Ib. p. 39.}
more Need of a new divine Authority to reform the Corruptions of the Romish Church, than ever there was to reform the Corruptions of Paganism. And it is not unreasonable to think, that the Divine Providence will send some

ex-

extraordinary Means to restore Christianity to that Church, whose Apostacy seems incurable by all ordinary Methods. How tenderly soever he treats the Church of England, yet he

Defen. of the
Plea, p. 75,
76. *has the following Words; With respect to ourselves, I may, in general, say, that the Doctrine of Tritheism, of human Authority in Matters merely of Religion, and the Spirit of Popery or Imposition, which is the Essence of Popery, greatly are insisted on, and prevail amongst us; and besides a general Corruption of Manners, and Uncharitableness in Differences of Opinions, unknown to Heathens; Christian Professors of the highest Dignity in the Church, seeking their own Things daily more than the Things of Christ. Having made a Panegyrick on One in the highest Station of the Church (for it seems he can find One deserving it) he says, One such Example will do more Good to True Religion, than Writing a thousand Pastoral Letters without it will do. Had he said, that One such bright Example will do as much Good to Religion, as certain Pastoral Letters had done Hurt; this would have been a Compliment indeed; especially considering that as*

Plea, &c.
p. 76. *he justly observes, The End of Unbelievers is more effectually gain'd by our zealous bigotted Professors of Christianity placing it on a wrong Foundation, and building on it Doctrines inconsistent with the clearest Reasons. Thus the Love of Truth has made this good Man do Justice to Natural Religion.*

Ib. p. 77.

THE next Writer I shall consider is Mr. Foster, in his Discourse of *The Usefulness, Truth, and Excellency of the Christian Revelation*; &c. This Gentleman, after having

Pref. p. 1. *declar'd in his Preface, that 'tis a general Observation, that Infidelity increases very much amongst us of late; begins his*

Dis-

Discourse, by saying, *For my part, I think it an inestimable* ^{Usefulness, Truth, &c. of the Christian Revela. p. 2.} *Happiness, that we live not only in an inquisitive Age, but in a Land of Liberty, where People may urge their Objections against the Establish'd Religion with much more Freedom, than in many other Countries that are called by the Christian Name; in which the People, not being allow'd the Use of their Reason and free Inquiry, are swallow'd up in the grossest Enthusiasm and Superstition, and Slaves in a double Sense, both to their Princes, and their Priests. May this happy Liberty encrease, which I take to have a close Connexion even with our Civil Liberty. ---- Let not such as write in Defence of the Christian Religion, claim any Privilege above their Opponents, merely because they write on the Popular, and Orthodox Side of the Question; since the Natural Rights of both Parties are equal. Tho' this is Writing like a Patron of Liberty, both Religious and Civil; yet he complains, that the Author of Christianity, &c. magnifies the Powers of ^{P. 3.} *Reason, with a View to lessen, or destroy the Use of Revelation. But if Revelation is a reasonable Religion, the more the Powers of Reason are magnified, the more it is for the Honour of Revelation. Can any One magnify more the Powers of Reason, than this Writer himself has done; in saying, Reason is our ultimate Rule in* ^{P. 5.} *all our religious Inquiries; a Rule, by which Revelation itself must be judg'd? Is not this, in Effect, Owning Revelation to be no Rule; at least, no perfect Rule? For, how can that be a perfect Rule, when nothing it teaches, tho' ever so often inculcated, is to be admitted, till it appears to be agreable to another Rule, by which we must govern ourselves in all our religious Inquiries. If these are his real Sentiments, does he not hereby renounce even the Protestant Religion? since he says, The Fundamental* ^{p. 350.}*

Principle of Protestants is, that the Scriptures are their ONLY Rule.

Usefulness,
Truth, &c.
P. 353.

1 Thes. 5.
21, 22.
P. 254.

P. 11.

P. 95.

HE says, *Original Revelation itself will stand the Test of Reason, and bear even a severe and critical Examination.* If so, must not every Doctrine it teaches be tried by the Test of Reason; and must not That, by which all Revelation is to be tried whether it comes from God, appear more evidently to come from him? Otherwise we try *ignotum per ignotius*. 'Tho' it is a self-evident Truth, that rational Creatures can have no other Rule but Reason to govern their Actions by; yet to prove it he quotes Scripture, *Prove all Things; Hold fast that which is good; Abstain from all Appearance of Evil.* The natural Sense of which, says he, is, that Christians should believe nothing implicitly, but use their Understandings to judge of the Nature and Consequences of all Things, that are commended to them as divine Truths, and of their Evidence; and when they have form'd their Judgment, upon mature Reflection and Examination, hold fast that which is good; i. e. adhere inflexibly to what they apprehend to be right and fit, and abstain from all Appearance of Evil. This is supposing Men are to read the Scriptures as they do Tully's Offices; and to admit, or not admit its Dictates, as they judge them agreeable, or not agreeable to their Reason. As a further Proof that we are to be thus entirely governed, he says, *The Principles of Natural Religion are capable of strict Demonstration.* But the utmost he allows Revelation is, that as there may be probable Evidence for its Truth, so there may be for its Conveyance. This is supposing, that except both these are probable, we have no probable Evidence of the Truth of that Revelation we are blessed with at present. But because Men, in the common Course of Life,

Life, act according to Probability, he applies this to Matters of Belief. Surely he cannot but know, that Belief is not in our Power; and that the Mind can only submit to that Evidence which forces its Assent. This he himself owns in saying, that *Faith can neither be a Virtue, or a Vice, because Men can no otherwise believe than as Things appear to them.* p. 279.

WHEN a Man, tho' of ever so good Parts, undertakes to defend an inconsistent Scheme, he must unavoidably be guilty of Inconsistencies; sometimes he will be obliged to say, *'Tis unquestionably true in Fact whatever the Cause of it be, that there is nothing the Bulk of Mankind are more averse to than serious Thought and Consideration. --- Their Indolence makes them take up with commonly receiv'd Principles, and follow them implicitly, &c.* At another Time, he will find himself obliged to say, *I have all along taken it for granted, that the common People will read, and consider, and make Use of those Helps which are in their Hands; in Order to understand the Proof of the Truth, and Purity of a Traditional Religion.* p. 12. p. 187.

THIS Writer, to do further Justice to Reason, says, *That the Faculty of Reason implanted by God in Mankind, however it may have been neglected and abused in Times past, will, whenever Men begin to exercise it aright, enable them to judge of these Things. As by Means of this, they were capable of discovering at first the Being and Perfection of God; and that he governs the World with absolute Wisdom, Equity, and Goodness; and what those Duties are which they owe to him, and to one another; they must be as capable, if they will divest themselves of Prejudice, and reason impartially, of rectifying any Mistakes, which they may have fallen into about those important Points.* Their p. 42.

noble Powers of Thought and Reflection, if they can enable them to find out Truth, must be sufficient, if they make a right Use of them, to recover them from Error. It matters not whether they have hitherto thought right, or wrong ; nor indeed, whether they have thought at all ; let them but begin to consider seriously, and examine carefully and impartially, and they must be able to find out all those Truths, which, as reasonable Creatures, they are capable of knowing ; and which necessarily affect their Duty and Happiness. They will soon come to form just Notions, in general, of a Religion that is worthy of God ; and consequently, be fit to judge whether any particular Revelation be worthy of him. And to suppose otherwise, is only to make Reason serviceable in forming our first Sentiments about Religion ; but if we pervert it, and set out wrong, our Errors are incurable ; and this most excellent, and distinguishing Gift of the great Creator, which is the highest Mark of our Dignity above the mere Animal World, is render'd for ever useless.

THIS is all I contend for ; since this is Owning that Reason, whenever Men consult it, will soon enable them to discover the Being and Perfections of God ; what those Duties are which they owe to him and one another ; and all those Truths, which, as rational Creatures, they are capable of knowing : Can Revelation teach us what we, as rational Creatures, are incapable of knowing ? He is, certainly, in the right, in supposing that Men, by attending to Reason, will soon come to form just Notions in general of a Religion that is worthy of God ; since without these antecedent just Notions, they cou'd not be capable of judging whether any particular Revelation was worthy to come from him. If Reason is the only Test, by which we must judge what is worthy

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

xiii

thy to come from God ; what have we to do, but to attend to it ? In so doing, we shall know all that God can require ; since we are certain, he can require nothing of us, which is unworthy of himself, or improper for rational Agents to observe.

CAN any Thing be more inconsistent with this Description he gives of the Faculty of *Reason*, than in supposing that the *Degeneracy of Mankind was so great, and so universal, that the Powers of Reason and Philosophy were either not employ'd to restore them to their Original State ; or after they had done their utmost were found to be ineffectual* : And consequently, it had been in vain for them to have had Recourse to Reason, that ultimate Rule in all our religious Inquiries.

p. 22.

IF, as this Writer owns, *the Substance of True Religion always has been, and always will be the same in all Ages and Nations ; consisting in the Belief of such Principles, and the Practice of such Duties only as are founded on the Nature and Reason of Things ;* how can he say *the Bulk of Mankind were under the Power of almost invincible Prejudices ; and so ignorant, that it may be question'd, whether they deserv'd the Character of moral Agents, or not ; which,* he says, *may be owing more to the unhappy Circumstances in which Providence had plac'd them, than to any wilful Fault of their own.* This is certainly little less than a blasphemous Reflection on Providence for placing them in that State, as well as Nonsense, in talking of a *Fault* that is not *wilful*.

p. 27.

p. 67, 68.

THIS Writer, speaking of the Unchangeableness of God, says, *That only supposes in general, that he will always do what is wisest and best.* If so, we may be certain, that

p. 300.

Man-

Mankind were never, much less for numberless Ages, in a deplorable Condition for Want of a Revelation ; since the Unchangeableness of God always necessarily causing him to do what is wisest and best, must have placed them in the best, and happiest Circumstances ; in which Circumstances the greatest Part of Mankind still are, without being burdened with any *Addenda* to the Religion of Reason and Nature.

p. 72. If, as he supposes, *the present Constitution of Things is upon the whole wise and good* ; does not That infer, the Universality of a Revelation wou'd not be good for the Whole ? Or else that God does not do what is good for the Whole ?

p. 66. If, God, as he says, *establish'd such a Course and Order of Things, with respect to Mankind, as was most worthy his infinite Wisdom and Goodness* ; what Reason can he assign, why God should alter this Course and Order of Things, so worthy his infinite Wisdom and Goodness.

p. 69. *Tho' it cannot be deny'd, says this Writer, that when the World is over-run with Ignorance and Superstition, a Revelation is extremely desirable, and might be highly useful ; this is no Argument at all, that God is necessarily oblig'd to communicate it ; tho' it may be a Reason why he may.* But whatever God, who always acts according to the Reason and Fitness of Things, may do, he certainly will do ; not because he has not a physical Power to act, or not act ; but because his moral Nature will always oblige him to do what is fit, and reasonable. Now if a Revelation was *extremely desirable, and highly useful to a World over-run with Ignorance and Superstition* ; the same Reason which obliged God to grant it to some, would

INTRODUCTION.

would have obliged him to grant it to All, to whom it was equally useful; and who equally deserved it as well as equally wanted it.

IF God, as this Writer says, *to shew the greater Extent* p. 78: *of his Goodness, made a Variety of Creatures*; will it follow, that it would be a Mark of his Goodness to deprive any of them of those Advantages, which, from the Beginning, were in common to all before? Can he give an Instance in any *Species* of Animals, who, some Ages since, were upon a Level with one another; but Part of whom, God (to shew his Goodness) has deprived at present of the Blessing of one Eye; while the rest have both their Eyes? Yet This is what he argues for, in Effect, with relation to Mankind; who, for numberless Ages, according to him, were placed by God upon a Level as to their future Happiness; and yet at present, as if God had repented of his former Goodness, the greatest Part of them are deprived of that Degree of Happiness, which originally he designed for all who were not wanting to themselves.

THE Absurdity of this Notion, tho' the greatest Stress is laid on it, will more fully appear; if we consider that God, before Mankind existed, cou'd have no Kindness for Men in one Part of the World rather than in another; and that his Kindness afterwards must be in Proportion to their living up to the Laws he gave them. Now if Christianity has made any Alteration in the immutable Will of God; it must consist in God's depriving the Majority of Mankind, without any Fault of theirs, of that Happiness, which he at first designed them: And all this for no Reason, but because he thought fit to make certain *Addenda* to Natural Religion for others, tho' not for them;
who,

who, as this Writer owns, can't be concern'd to know what they have no Means of knowing; and consequently, their Ignorance of these *Addenda* cannot, in the least, hinder them from being as acceptable to their Maker, as if they had known them: Especially,

p. 81, 82. IF, as this Writer contends, God is equally desirous all Men shou'd obtain that Happiness, which is suitable to their particular Stations, Capacities, and Circumstances; and that in Quality of their Governour and Judge, he has given them sufficient Means to know, and practice all he requires of them; What Cause can this Gentleman assign, why Men in China, or Japan, who have acted according to these Means, shou'd not be equally rewarded with those acting in the same Manner in Spain, or Italy? This Life being a State of Trial equally to all Men.

Chap. 2.

THIS Writer spends a whole Chapter, in endeavouring to vindicate the Conduct of Providence, in proving it consistent with the Perfection of God, not to make the Christian Revelation universal; and consequently, that any Attempt to make it so, must be inconsistent with the Conduct of Providence, and the Perfection of God: He ought, therefore, to have given a List of those Countries, for whose Use alone God designed this Revelation; lest our *Missionaries* should attempt to propagate it in those Places, for which Providence never intended it.

BUT it is in this Chapter only that he talks thus; in all other Places he takes it for granted, that *Revelation* was design'd for all Mankind, as well as to last to the End of the World.

SINCE this Writer contends, that God has vouchsafe to give a Revelation to some Parts of the World, when he was not oblig'd to give it to any; may he not have given it them for a Time,

Time, as the Laws were, which he gave to the single Nation of the *Jews*: And therefore it lies upon him to prove, that the Revelation he contends for was designed for us at present; or indeed, for any other Age than That, in which the Promulgators liv'd; since they, as 'tis plain from a Number of Texts, believ'd the Age they liv'd in to be the last Age; and consequently, the first and last Age of the Gospel. And Christ, as he wrote nothing himself for the Instruction of Posterity (designing to return upon Earth the very same Age) so neither did he require his Disciples to write at all; much less for future Ages. If he had requir'd that of them, they cou'd not have believ'd their own Age to have been the last. Besides, must not this Revelation be design'd for Men of that Age only, by the Words which immediately follow Christ's Injunction to the Apostles to preach the Gospel? *These Signs, says he, shall follow those that believe; They shall cast out Devils, cure Diseases, speak with new Tongues.* Mat. 16. 15, 17.

IF the Belief of this Religion was to be continued to all Ages, would not the Signs, which were to accompany Belief, have been likewise continued? Otherwise Men (an Objection which can't be made to Natural Religion) would be equally bound to believe, when the Grounds of Belief were unequal: Are not Men now destitute of all those super-natural Helps of the Apostolick Age, when God Acts 2. 17, 18. *poured out of his Spirit upon all Flesh?* And alas! in quite different Circumstances, being either wholly left to judge for themselves of the Meaning of a Book, of which they are altogether ignorant, as well as of the Proofs, on which its Authority is founded; or else to have an implicate Faith in such Guides, who, 'tis notorious, every where maintain those Opinions which maintain them. This our

D

Writer

P. 188. Writer in Effect owns, by saying, *That in Countries where free Debate is discourag'd, and forbidden under severe Penalties, the People are obliged to take their Accounts both of a Revelation and its Proofs from certain Persons, authorized and maintained for that Purpose; they can have no more Reason to believe even a true traditional Religion, than Others may have to believe a false One.* Has not this been the Case ever since Christianity prevail'd? Can it be said, a private Man had any where the Liberty of free Debate, when it was every where highly criminal for him to dispute the Authority of the *Canon*? Can this Writer tell us in what Church, tho' founded on the Right Every One has to choose his own Religion, this Liberty is not, even now, restrain'd under severe Penalties?

THIS Writer supposes, Men will be rewarded according
 P. 76. to their different Capacities; *This Difference*, says he, *is the express Will of the Creator, --- and results from the Original Constitution of Things, which was at first settled by God.* From this Argument he wou'd infer, that God, consistent with his universal Benevolence, may give all Christians of what Denomination soever, greater Rewards, tho' they have not greater Capacities; nor make a better Use of them than Others: So that allowing this to be a stated and fixed Rule, that God will reward Men according to their different Capacities; this Rule will demonstrate that no Man must expect a superior Reward for being a Christian; except being a Christian, and having better Capacities than other Men, be one and the same Thing.

THIS Writer, tho' he labours to prove that different Capacities are from the express Will of God, in Order to Mens being rewarded according to those Capacities; and
 P. 30. therefore says, *These different Capacities do not depend on*
 bodily

INTRODUCTION.

xix

bodily Organs ; yet in Opposition to this he says, *We see in Fact, that there are in the human Species many downright Idiots ; who, very probably, were it not for some accidental Defect in the bodily Organs, might think, and reason as well as other Men.* But if this downright Idiotism is owing to some accidental Defects, well may lesser Differences be owing to the same Cause. Nay, this Writer owns as much in saying, *The Original Constitution, notwithstanding those accidental Defects, was, upon the whole, wise and good.* And consequently, no accidental Advantages or Disadvantages, in Point of Capacity, can be any more a Reason for God to give greater, or lesser Happiness to People in a future State, than any accidental Advantages or Disadvantages, in Point of Beauty or Strength ; much less can it be a Reason, why God should make such a Difference between his Children ; where, on one Hand, no such accidental Advantages can be pretended ; or, on the other, no such accidental Defects. And in Truth, the Happiness of Men in general, even in this Life, does not arise from the Degree of their Capacity, or of their Circumstances ; but from their acting right according to the Capacities God has given them, and the Circumstances in which he has placed them.

p. 68.

IN Order to justify his partial Notion of God's dealing with Mankind, he thinks it infinitely absurd to suppose, that Men, if equally sincere, will be equally rewarded ; or enjoy an equal Degree of Happiness in a future State. *This Principle, says he, is a Discouragement to virtuous Actions, as well as a Reflection upon the Wisdom and Justice of the Governor of the World. Upon our Author's Principles, Sincerity, says he, seems to be the only Thing, which is absolutely insisted on to render Men acceptable to God ; which does not*

p. 317

p. 88.

necessarily imply in it the Knowledge, and Practice of all the Duties of Natural Religion itself.

THESE, I freely own, are my Sentiments; since, I think, nothing can be more evident, than that whoever sincerely, or to the best of his Understanding, endeavours to find out the Will of God, must find out what God, who expects no Impossibilities, wills him to know, and do; and we can never be reduced, after such an impartial Examination, to the sad *Dilemma* of committing Sin, whether we act, or do not act according to Conscience. If this Writer can discover no other Way, by which we can know the Will of God, or be render'd acceptable to him; he, by discouraging the necessary Duty, must be conscious he advances an absurd Notion in Defence of Opinions equally absurd; and therefore, in Answer to all he says on this Head, I shall con-

Locke's Essay
of hum. Und.
B. 4. c. 17.
p. 392.

clude this Paragraph with the Words of Mr. *Locke*: "He
" that sincerely seeks to discover Truth by those Helps
" and Abilities he has, may have the Satisfaction in doing
" his Duty as a rational Creature; that tho' he shou'd
" miss Truth, he will not miss the Reward of it. For
" he governs his Assent right, and places it as he shou'd,
" who, in any Case, or Matter whatsoever, believes, or
" disbelieves according as Reason directs him. He that
" does otherwise, transgresses against his own Light, and
" misuses the Faculties which were given him to no other
" End, but to search and follow the clearer Evidence,
" and greater Probability.

p. 266.

THIS Writer owns, *There can be nothing but general Rules, in a Revelation design'd for the Use of all Nations; and to last till the End of the World; for if it be particular and circumstantial, it can only be a Rule for Individuals, and not for the whole rational Species. To suppose the*

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

xxi

the contrary is, says he, to talk of an eternal temporary Law, or an universal Particular. And again, All Reve- P. 35, 36.
lation can do for us, is to lay down the general Principles and Rules of Conduct in all Circumstances; but that we must consult our Reason about the Application of these general Rules to particular Cases. ----- If our Knowledge of Natural Religion, i. e. of the general Rules to be observed in our Behaviour towards God and our Fellow Creatures, and in governing our Affections and Appetites, be a great Advantage to us, notwithstanding we are oblig'd to the constant Use of our Reason, in Order to judge with Respect to particular Actions, whether or no they agree with these general Rules; the Knowledge of a Revelation, that teaches all the same general Principles, which, for the most part, are very easily accommodated to Circumstances, must be an equal Advantage.

Is not this Owning, that *The Gospel is only a Republication of the Religion of Nature?* And that One does not extend to any Thing further than the Other, but that both are compris'd under the same general Principles? And the more to shew his intire Agreement with this Infidel he pretends to confute, he says, *Christianity makes no Al-* P. 258.
teration in the Natural Rights of Mankind. If so, they still retain their Natural Rights of appointing all Things of a mutable Nature to what Subject soever they belong, and to alter them as they see just Occasion; and consequently, that Reason and Revelation not only agree as to the Things which are to be done, but as to the Manner of doing them.

IN several Places besides That, where he has given so just and noble a Description of the Faculty of Reason, he owns, that the Errors Men fell into were the Effects

of

of their not attending to the Dictates of their Reason ;
 p. 10. *which, he allows, is capable of discovering all the Duties Men owe to God, or their Fellow-Creatures ; or what relates to the right Government of their Affections and Appetites in the various Circumstances and Relations of human*
 Pref. p. 6. *Life. Reason, says he, rightly improv'd, is sufficient at all Times, to teach Men all that God requires of them in their*
 Book p. 11. *various Circumstances. And that those Faculties by which we are distinguish'd from Brutes, if they are us'd after the best Manner we can, must answer the End for which God gave them, and justify our Conduct. This is supposing that Revealed Religion is the very same with Natural, and only re-published to cure our Non-attention to the latter : If Revelation has not cured this grand Fault of Non-attention, but instead of it grosser Absurdities, both in Relation to the Honour of God and the Good of Man, have prevail'd ; Non-attention to the Law of Nature could be no Reason for God (except he did not foresee the Consequence) to burden us with any *Addenda* to Natural Religion ; which, in Proportion to their Number, must increase our Non-attention to it ; and consequently, if Revelation does not prevent this ill Effect, it is given to no Purpose ; or to an ill Purpose.*

THIS Writer, notwithstanding he owns this exact Agreement between Natural and Revealed Religion ; and that One no more than the Other, can extend to Things positive or particular ; yet he says, *When God gives a Revelation, that is design'd for general Use, and consequently considers Men only as reasonable Creatures, and is not adapted to the Genius, Completion, or State of any particular Nation ; 'tis natural to expect that it will be plain and simple, and not over-loaded (and I may add not loaded at all) with Things of an external*

ternal and positive Nature. This, says he, proves the superior Excellency of the Christian Religion above the Jewish; tho' he owns, the Rites of the latter were instituted by a Being of infinite Wisdom; yet in Defiance of what he even here lays down, he says, *I readily grant the Author of Christianity, &c. that the instituted Means prescribed by Revelation are not of such fixed and immutable Obligation; but that, agreeably to the Law of Nature, they are to be practised, or omitted, as best suits that End for which they were ordain'd.* To imagine the contrary (as he judiciously observes) is to make Things dependent on Circumstances independent; Things that are proper only under some Circumstances, necessary under all Circumstances: Nay, to make Ends mutable, and Means immutable; and that these are to continue in Force, tho' by Change of Circumstances they become prejudicial; nay, destructive to the End for which alone they were ordain'd. This is plainly confessing, that positive Things are in their own Nature mutable; and that Men are to practise, or omit them, as, they judge, best suits the End for which they were ordain'd.

THIS Writer fairly owns, that *Positive Institutions have been us'd superstitiously, and that Men have laid equal Stress on them as upon Morality itself, can't be deny'd; Nay, that they have resolv'd the Whole of Religion into external Observances; and instead of making it consist in the most necessary Duties of Piety, Justice and Charity, plac'd it not only in the instituted Means appointed by God, but in trifling Ceremonies, useless Speculations, and incomprehensible Mysteries of Man's inventing, and imposing; and that their Zeal for these Things, animated by blind Superstition and Prejudice, and under the Influence of interested and designing Men,*

has

has transported them beyond all Bounds ; even to despise and trample upon the Sacred, and Eternal Rules of Natural Religion.

LET me ask this Writer, whether these monstrous Absurdities could have happened, if Men had adhered to the Light of Nature, and admitted nothing to be the Will of God, but what is founded on Reason ; and that all positive Things, which can only be consider'd as Means to an End, are to be changed according as Circumstances require.

Pref. p. 7. THIS Writer, making an Apology for the Corruptions which prevail among Christians, says, *The Corruptions of the Heathen World, if they had been much greater than they really were, would no more than they now do, have inferr'd the Insufficiency of Reason, as a Guide in itself ; it must follow by the same Rule, that the Degeneracy among Christians, tho' it could be shewn to be more gross than any Pagans were ever chargeable with, is no rational Prejudice either against the Perfection, or Perspicuity of the Christian Revelation. For it is most evident, that in both Cases the Event is not owing to a Defect in the Original Rule. Which is supposing the Rules in both Religions to be the same ; for if they differ, their Difference must shew some Defect in One of those Rules.*

Pref. p. 4. There is, says this Writer, one Thing however, that appears to be a very strong and common Prejudice against the Christian Religion ; which I cannot omit, since it depends entirely on Christians themselves ; and consequently, as they might have prevented, it is not yet out of their Power to remove it ; I mean those Corruptions in Doctrine, and gross Superstitions in Worship, by which they have defac'd the Simplicity and Beauty of true Christianity ; and which have been urg'd indeed, with greater Zeal than Morality itself. These, the

the Adversaries of our Religion, without examining further, blend with its original, and essential Doctrines; and thus it is condemn'd for no other Reason, but because it has been misrepresented. A melancholly Reflection this! that Christians should furnish Infidels with the choicest Weapons to attack their own Cause; but at the same Time, on the Side of Unbelievers, a sure Argument of a shallow and superficial Judgment in these Points; and which destroys all their Pretences to fair Reasoning.

BUT does this Writer say any more than what the numerous Sects of Christians that now are, or ever were in the World have said; that Christianity is a Thing plain in itself, provided all other Sects understood it as we do; and did not, by differing with us, afford Infidels the choicest Weapons to attack the common Cause: Thus by every Sect condemning each Others *Addenda*, they all, in their Turn, do Justice to Natural Religion, and its Defenders.

How uncertain must these *Addenda* be, when tho' perhaps there have been, for many Ages, the better Part of a Million of Ecclesiasticks to ascertain, and explain them; yet this Writer (whose *Addenda* confine him to a very narrow Sect, no where tolerated till of late) does not scruple to arraign the Sentiments of the Generality of Christians in most Ages; in affirming, that *the New Testament says not p. 327. one Word of Satisfaction, much less of strict and adequate Satisfaction; not a Syllable of the infinite Evil of Sin, of infinite Justice, the hypostatical Union, or the Deity's being so united to the Man Christ Jesus, as that the two infinitely distinct Natures constitute one Person; and by Virtue of this Union, giving an infinite Value to the Sufferings of the human Nature, and enabling it to pay a strict Equivalent to God's offended vindictive Justice.*

E

AND

P. 352. AND not content with thus arraigning the Christians, he adds, *I think it worth my While to say, there's one Remark more, which our Author has made that is worth the reciting: However (says he) the Heathens allowing One, and but One most High God, did not so far derogate from the Honour of the One True God, as to pretend that the most distinguish'd among their several Mediators was equal to him; Equality and Mediation being as inconsistent as Equality and Supremacy. And they would have made their Religion an errant Jumble, if they had worshipp'd these Gods sometimes as Mediators only; sometimes as sovereign Disposers of Things; and sometimes as both together. I think, I say, worth my While to recite this Passage; not that 'tis any Difficulty against the Christian Religion itself, which teaches nothing at all of this mysterious incomprehensible Divinity; but that Christians may see how much it suffers by the Darkness and Confusion of human Schemes; which are not only father'd upon it, but rank'd among its fundamental, and most important Doctrines.*

If these absurd Notions are contrary to the Light of Nature, and would never have been thought of, had Men adhered to that Light, but are wholly owing to Christians, from Age to Age, judging them to be the Dictates of Revelation; is this, I say, an Argument of the Plainness of Revelation, or of its Excellency, beyond That of Natural Religion?

LET me ask this Writer, whether any good Parent, did he foresee the Consequence, would leave behind him a Testament (when there was no Necessity for it) express'd in such obscure Terms, as should, in disputing about its Meaning, set his Children at perpetual Variance, and cause those very Mischiefs it was designed to prevent.

THIS

INTRODUCTION.

xxvii

THIS Writer, for Fear of running into any such Absurdities as he charges the Christian World with, seems to have given up most of the other *Addenda*; and tho' in his Book, he contends, that *Christ is a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*; yet he says, that *no Sacrifices, no, not that of Christ himself, were design'd to propitiate the Deity; nor incline him to be favourable and gracious to Mankind. And that the very Institution of them must in the Nature of the Thing, suppose he was already propitious, and already disposed to be merciful, and forgive the Offences of his Creatures. --- The Destroying such an innocent Person, ---- the Son of God, was unquestionably a very wicked Action; it will not I presume, be thought, that the most wise and holy Governor, and Judge of the World cou'd have determin'd any Thing about it further than to suffer natural Causes to operate. And then concludes, that those Sacrifices having nothing in their abstract Nature to atone for moral Guilt, or merit Pardon, cou'd not be intended to propitiate the Deity; but can only be standing Memorials of that, which he himself owns, is of a Nature too evident to want any Memorials; since he says, The Christian Religion does not so much as intimate, that Natural Reason cou'd not discover God to be a propitious Being, ready to be reconcil'd to his guilty Creatures upon their Repentance; but on the contrary, lays down this as a fundamental Principle of all Religion! And it is strange, if what both Reason and Revelation so plainly express is not to be relied on, without some certain arbitrary Signs or Memorials. He certainly ought to have the Honour of this glorious Discovery. Who before him ever thought, that Christ's Sufferings, Passion and Death, nay, his Mediation and Intercession were only Memorials of God's Readiness to pardon Sin; but not in the least any Motive to induce him to it.*

p. 339.

p. 364.

p. 362.

p. 335.

p. 328.

P. 345. I MIGHT take Notice of his inconsistent Notion about a Mediator ; he first supposes Christ to be a Mediator between two Parties, *God* and *Man* ; which supposes that both Parties chose him to this End ; and then that he appointed only One to mediate to him, whom we ought not to worship thro' a Mediator ; he having a mediatorial Kingdom conferred on him. A King, no doubt, may be a Mediator, but how a Kingdom can consist in Mediation, especially to the King of Kings, he has not told us ; Or how we can be oblig'd to offer up our Prayers to God thro' a Mediator ; when in the *Lord's Prayer* itself, we are commanded to offer up our Prayers immediately to God ; Or how the same Person can be both a Judge and a Mediator ; Or what Room there can be for any one Act of Mediation in a Being who is Omniscient ; and in his own Nature more gracious, and propitious to Mankind, than any Mediator can be supposed to be ; and who must be reconciled to Mankind before he appointed any (for Form-sake) to mediate to him for a Reconciliation.

p. 81. I SHALL make but one Remark more, and then conclude ; a Man, whose Power is limited, and can favour all who equally deserve it, may justly prefer some to others ; but to suppose the common Parent of Mankind, whose Power as well as Goodness is unlimited, can act partially, and become a *Respecter of Persons*, as this Writer has zealously contended ; and indeed, upon which his whole Scheme is built, is inconsistent with Revelation as well as Reason. The Character which is frequently given to God, both in the Old and New Testament, is, that *He is no Respecter of Persons* ; and in one Place it is said, *There is no Iniquity with the Lord our God, nor Respect of Persons*. But to do this Writer Justice, he seems at last to give up this absurd

No-

Deut. 32. 4.

Rom. 9. 14.

Deut. 10. 17.

Job 34. 19.

Acts 10. 24.

Rom. 2. 11.

Gal. 2. 6.

Eph. 6. 9.

Col. 3. 26.

2 Chro. 19. 7.

tion himself, and says, *The Christian Revelation represents* P. 339. *to Men, the universal Goodness of the common Father of Mankind; and that In every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him; and consequently encourages universal Benevolence, and an Esteem of the whole rational Creation, however distinguished by external Privileges.*

If by *External Privileges*, he means those Privileges, which before he contended to belong to Christians exclusively of all Others, he directly contradicts himself; since nothing can be more inconsistent with the universal Goodness of God, which he here contends for, than God's bestowing peculiar Privileges on some exclusive of others, without Regard to Merit, or Demerit; but to their being born in such, and such a Nation; and consequently, embracing the Religion of those Countries.

To do this Writer Justice, he cannot more fully renounce his former Notion, of the Partiality of the common Parent of Mankind, than by saying, that *Those who sincerely practise* P. 275. *the great Duties of Natural Religion, comprehended under the two Heads of the Love of God and our Neighbour, will not be condemn'd for their Ignorance of the peculiar Doctrines of Revelation; or for not understanding, or seeing the Reason and Obligation of positive Precepts, because they have attain'd to the great End of Religion, which all the subordinate Duties of it must be design'd to promote; viz. Rational Piety and Likeness to God, the right Government of their Passions, and fixing in their Minds Habits of Justice and universal Benevolence.*

SINCE He, and I, now seem to agree (tho' before he never differed with me, but when he differed with himself) I have nothing further to add, but to wish he may continue

tinue in this benevolent Temper of Mind; and then we may expect, that a Man of his Abilities, Hand and Heart going together, will become a powerful Defender of that Cause he now seems to oppose; or at least, that he will (to conclude with his own Words) *acknowledge his Mistakes like an honest Man, and sincere Lover of Truth.*

p. 2, 3. THE next Writer we are to consider is Dr. Conybeare, in what he calls his *Defence of Revealed Religion*; and he begins with lamenting, that *After We have been in Possession of Christianity for almost Seventeen hundred Years, We shou'd now be call'd upon to begin anew, and to set forth the original Title by which we hold. ----- And that it surely becomes Matter of Complaint, that the Ministers of the Gospel are interrupted in discharging a main Part of their Office. ----- And obliged to guard their People as well as they may against a total Revolt.*

THIS is supposing We have acquired a Title to our Religion, as to our Lands, by Prescription; and that the Tenure by which we hold our Faith, is derived from our Ancestors having been for a long Time together in Possession of that Faith; and that if People should now presume to judge for themselves, there is great Danger of a total Revolt.

THIS Writer should have told us what Christianity our *British* Ancestors have been so long in Possession of; since the prevailing Christianity in one Age has been very different from that which has prevailed in another; and in all Ages different Sects of Christians have charged each other, with holding Opinions inconsistent with Christianity. And indeed, Revolutions in any Religion not founded on the plain, and immutable Reason of Things, are unavoidable. But letting that pass, I say, If

IF Men are to found their Religion on the Length of Time, and it obtains a Right to be believed by Virtue of an immemorable Prescription; then Christianity in the first Age could have no such Title; and yet After-Ages can have nothing to support their Claim, but what they receive from the First Age; when *Paganism* (which for innumerable Ages had in a Manner spread it self over the whole World) pleaded Prescription and Possession against the Innovations Christianity was then making.

OUR Writer cannot but know, that, at the *Reformation*, the *Papists* mainly insisted on this Argument, to put a Stop to the Innovations the *Protestants* were then making, and insulted them for quitting the Religion of their Ancestors; on Pretence that every private Man has a Right to judge for himself, of the Truth of what the Wisdom of so many Ages had settled so unanimously, and with so much Deliberation: Tho', in Truth, *Rome* was not built in a Day, but it was after many Additions and Alterations, that Consummate Priest-Craft, *Popery*, arrived to the Height of Perfection.

THIS Writer, to shew how absurd it is for private Men now to presume to judge for themselves in Religious Matters, says, *Had our Cause been carried on in a suspicious Manner, never fairly decided, but supported merely by Artifice, and the Misapplication of Civil Force (which is Owning Civil Force ought to be applied) there might be the same Reason to call us back, and put us on proving these Matters.* But if Those, who went under the common Name of *Christians*, were from the Beginning (when One might justly expect Truth and Unanimity should go together) holding Opinions, for the most part as bad, if not worse than *Paganism* itself; their quitting *Paganism* to embrace such Opinions, could be no Proof, that it was Truth which influenced them in
their

Wake's Au-
thor. of Christ.
Princes. p.
307.

Ars Crit. c. 5

Def. of Rev.
Relig. p. 27,
28.

their new Choice. After the Empire became *Christian*, it cannot be pretended Reason had a fair Hearing; since as *Church-History* sufficiently informs us, Force and Violence supplied its Place; and the *Councils* sacrificed every Thing to their Interest, and accordingly were either *Imperial* or *Papal* Tools; and "We of the Laity, as instructed by this *Writer's Metropolitan*, are not so ignorant as not to know "the Violence, the Passion, the Malice, the Falshood, and "the Oppression, which reigned even in the Earliest Coun- "cils." In a Word, *Le Clerc* gives us a true, and lively Picture of those Times, in which this Writer thinks Things were fairly, and impartially settled. "Weak Princes (*says he*) as far from being Good as Wise, assembled a Pack "of paltry *Greeks*, who had spent their Lives in the Art "of cavilling about Words, without the least Knowledge "in Things; so very fond of wrangling, that they were "eternally in Feuds among themselves. To These were "added some few from the *West*, more stupid and igno- "rant indeed, but not a Whit more honest, who after much "scandalous quarrelling, did, at last, by their own Autho- "rity, establish certain unintelligible Propositions, which the "Vulgar implicitly revered as most heavenly Truths.

It is from the Authority of a Pack of these paltry *Greek*, and ignorant stupid *Latin* Fathers, that this Writer says,

There are such Distinctions in the Divine Nature, as are analogous to personal Distinctions amongst Men; Each Per- son so subsisting hath different Offices, and bears a different Relation to Mankind. And he might as well have added, *to Each Other.* Which is supposing the Divine Nature to be like the human, not a numerical, but a specific Nature, com- mon to several Persons of the same Sort, as much distin- guished from each other as human Persons can be distin- guished;





260